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AFFORDABLE HEALTH INSURANCE

(Mr. VEASEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to remind Americans today to hurry: they have 6 days left to sign up for the Affordable Care Act through their Federal and State exchanges and marketplaces. Don't believe the hype from the Republicans. The Affordable Care Act is working to improve the lives of millions of Americans. More than 5 million Americans have signed up so far through the marketplace, and they will continue to do so.

This weekend, I hosted two enrollment events in my district, both in Dallas and Fort Worth, and attended two additional ones to ensure that constituents in my district get the affordable health care they deserve. What I saw when I visited those events were rooms filled with men, women, and children looking to provide insurance for their families, looking to ensure that they are protected from unforeseen sickness and health issues.

Let's stop playing politics with people's health care. Let's work together to get every American covered.

□ 1215

DEFENDING RELIGIOUS LIBERTY FROM THE ACA

(Mr. BILIRAKIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BILIRAKIS. I rise today, Mr. Speaker, in support of religious liberty.

The Affordable Care Act, better known as ObamaCare, forces businesses to provide services like the morning-after pill as part of their health insurance. For businessowners who believe that life begins at conception, this aspect of the ACA violates their religious principles.

The First Amendment is sacred to Americans. At the time of its creation, the First Amendment was completely unique. God, not government, gave unalienable rights to women and men, including freedom to practice their religion without interference.

No individual should be forced to violate their religious beliefs. Opponents will say that this is restricting access to health care. I disagree. This is about ensuring the integrity of religious freedom for all Americans, regardless of religion. That is a founding American principle.

INVESTING IN SPACE EXPLORATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

(Mr. MCNERNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCNERNEY. Mr. Speaker, the U.S. has always been the world leader in space exploration. We were the first and only nation to put humans safely on the Moon and the only nation to send unmanned ships to Mars, among other extraordinary missions.

In 2011, NASA flew its last space shuttle mission. Without any new human lift system ready, the U.S. has had to depend on Russia to send our astronauts to space. This arrangement has worked because of a sense of cooperation and mutual respect between our two great nations' space programs.

But American innovation cannot be stopped. Several private companies are working with NASA to ensure that Americans can once again fly on American spaceships.

As a Nation, we should support this effort and encourage private American companies to accelerate their programs. These public-private partnerships will ensure that the U.S. does not rely solely on Russian spacecraft.

I urge my colleagues to consider the long-term benefits of investing in space exploration and scientific research.

RECOGNIZING BRANDI BRULEY

(Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ms. Brandi Bruley, principal of North Elementary School in my hometown of Taylorville, Illinois.

Ms. Bruley was recently named the Illinois Principals Association's 2014-2015 Elementary School Principal of the Year in recognition of her positive impact on her students and the entire educational community.

She has worked hard to improve communication between teachers and parents with a goal of raising student achievement. As a result of her efforts, North Elementary School has been awarded the Illinois State Board of Education's Spotlight Award for the last 3 years and made the ISBE Honor Roll in 2013.

Ms. Bruley has a long-standing and deep commitment to serving her students, faculty, and our entire community. Her experience and innovation enable her to bring creative ideas that focus on high standards for our local schools.

Congratulations and thank you to Brandi. This is a well-deserved award to recognize all that you do for our students and the entire Taylorville community.

IN HONOR OF THE ANNIVERSARY OF GREECE'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE FROM THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

(Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to cele-

brate the 193rd anniversary of Greece's declaration of independence from the Ottoman Empire.

The ancient Greeks forged the notion of democracy. They believed in the right of self-governance, one of the foundations of our great Nation; yet, for centuries, the Greek people—the people whose ancestors inspired our own country's founding, the people who Thomas Jefferson called the light which led ourselves out of Gothic darkness, the Greek people were denied this right.

Today, Greeks celebrate March 25 as the day when the Greeks began the long, hard battle for independence.

I recently met with Ambassador John Koenig, ambassador to Cyprus, to discuss the latest on our Cyprus negotiations. He was hopeful that real progress could be made in unifying the island and stopping the illegal Turkish occupation.

The U.S. must also continue to work to find a mutually agreeable name for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Greece is an important ally to the United States. I am proud to stand with American Greeks today to celebrate their independence and aspirations.

HOBBY LOBBY

(Mr. PETERS of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PETERS of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring attention to the Hobby Lobby case, which is being argued today at the Supreme Court.

In this case, a for-profit company is refusing to cover the birth control of its female employees, citing the owners' personal religious objections.

In 2014, the idea that a woman has to fight for access to birth control is astonishing. Ninety-nine percent of American women will use contraception at some point in their lives.

As I have said before, all health care decisions, including birth control and women's reproductive rights, should be between a woman and her doctor, not involving her boss or a politician here in Washington, D.C.

The wide availability of birth control has been an enormous benefit for millions of women and the American economy, enabling generations of women to support themselves financially, complete their education, and plan for the right time to start a family.

It is a basic, preventative health care option. It should not be available only at the discretion of a woman's employer, nor should a woman have to choose between her job and her health.

As a husband of nearly 28 years and a father of two, it seems pretty simple to me. Women, not bosses, should be in charge of their personal health care decisions.

HOBBY LOBBY

(Ms. HANABUSA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. HANABUSA. Mr. Speaker, today, the United States Supreme Court, just down the street, heard the arguments for Hobby Lobby, Inc., a for-profit corporation, which is refusing some or all contraceptive services in health plans offered to their employees.

The issue here is whether the religious beliefs of a shareholder, the owner, can dictate what type of contraceptive services a health plan will offer.

Note, this is not a religious institution or an employer like a church or a religious institution of any kind. It is a for-profit corporation.

The issue here is also whether an employer can pick and choose what type of services female employees can avail themselves of; and remember—remember—women in childbearing age actually pay 68 percent more for their medical coverage now—68 percent more. That is just not fair.

I hope the Supreme Court will reverse the Hobby Lobby decision and say that the Constitution and the laws of this great Nation support women.

HIDDEN TAXES INCLUDED IN THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

(Mr. YODER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. YODER. Mr. Speaker, you wouldn't know it by the weather, but it will soon be April, and tax day is right around the corner. As Americans scramble to gather their W-2s and other important tax documents, many are unaware of the extra hidden taxes included in the Affordable Care Act that will ultimately fall on them.

These hidden taxes will surprise and catch hardworking families and small businesses off guard and put a strain on family budgets that are already stretched thin.

A 3.5 percent tax on insurance premiums, a 2.3 percent medical device tax—raising the cost of pacemakers, prosthetics, stents, and more—a tanning tax, an investment income and Medicare payroll surtax, the list goes on and on; and all these costs are passed on to Americans and families in our communities.

That is hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars leaving our communities, out of the pockets of hardworking families in States like Kansas and heading to Washington, D.C.

Mr. Speaker, with the many challenges Americans face today, the last thing they need this tax season is to carry a heavier government tax burden on their backs.

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY

(Mr. LIPINSKI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember and honor the more than 3 million Americans who served in the Vietnam war. This weekend, we will observe Vietnam Veterans Day to pay tribute to these brave Americans who were called to serve during one of our Nation's longest and most difficult conflicts.

Lasting more than a decade, Vietnam defined a generation. Over 58,000 Americans were killed, and those who did return home were not treated as the American heroes that they are.

In recent years, I am grateful that most Americans have been able to put aside their opinions about specific military missions and have an unwavering commitment to our courageous men and women operating in dangerous places around the world.

Vietnam Veterans Day is meant to reaffirm our respecting gratitude for those that served our Nation in that war and show a generation of soldiers our immense gratitude. I will be doing so this Saturday at the VFW Post in Lemont, Illinois.

I ask my colleagues to join me in doing the same, not just this weekend, but every day, because our Vietnam veterans, and all our veterans, deserve this.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

(Mr. KILDEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, for far too long, comprehensive immigration reform has been a low priority for the Speaker and for the Republican leadership. Americans have spoken loud and clear. They want comprehensive immigration reform.

Just last year, as the Senate was considering comprehensive reform, the Speaker implied that the House would take it up after the Senate did. The Senate acted in a bipartisan fashion and passed comprehensive reform on a vote of 68–32.

Then we were told that the House would take up comprehensive immigration reform after the Speaker brought to his conference his immigration reform principles. That happened at the end of January; yet nothing—nothing has been brought to the floor.

If there is not a reason for us to do this on the basis of the policy, which I think is clear, it is consistent with our national interest and our national values to institute comprehensive immigration reform.

I just would direct Members of the other side to take a look at the bipartisan CBO report that was published that shows that comprehensive immigration reform would reduce our national deficit by \$900 billion.

It is the right policy, it is good economics, and we should bring it up right away.

CONGRESS MUST REVERSE GOP ELIMINATION OF CRITICAL LIFE-LINE FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

(Ms. KAPTUR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, during Women's History Month, I rise to recognize and pay tribute to the life of Joyce Wise of Sandusky County, Ohio, a remarkable, sparkling, witty, intelligent, generous, and kind woman who loved her family, her community, and her country.

She was a political activist. Her indefatigable efforts improved our State, improved our community, and broadened representation for women and men across our country.

Joyce would have been the first person to speak up here on behalf of the 2 million American job seekers who have lost their unemployment benefits and the 72,000 Americans who lose their benefits every single week, one every 8 seconds due to Republican obstruction.

She would have been the first to point out it is the Republican's failure to extend unemployment insurance that has actually put millions and millions of our families out to sea.

If the Republicans want to limit unemployment benefits, they should start by creating more jobs. I am waiting for the first good jobs bill to come to this floor from the other side of the aisle.

Joyce Wise understood that every citizen matters and those who work hard for a living shall be respected. May her family and friends draw strength from her unbelievable spirit and may her legacy live on in fighting for justice for all.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

(Ms. BROWN of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, you can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time.

The Republicans have turned a blind eye to the plight of more than 2 million Americans whose unemployment benefits have been cut off.

In my State of Florida, we have over 100,000 Floridians struggling to find work and are unable to collect insurance, which has also led to nearly \$130 million in lost revenue for the State of Florida; yet in spite of repeated attempts time and time again, Republicans in Congress have coldheartedly refused to restore this vital economic lifeline that helps people support their families and pay their bills while they look for a new job during this very difficult time, the worst time since the Great Depression.

To whom God has given much, much is expected. I urge my House and Senate Republican colleagues to look inside their hearts and do the right thing for the American people and pass an